

Closing Comments

Regarding Guitar Accompaniment:

Hopefully you have enjoyed the duets in this book and have taken some notice of what happens in the accompaniment parts. As mentioned in the introduction, this volume is by no means a methodology for creating accompaniments. The truth of the matter is that if you gave the same song to ten competent players and asked them to form a rhythm part, you would most likely have ten different renditions of the song. Undoubtedly, there would be some similarities but every player brings their own likes and dislikes, personality and experience to the table. Along with that, they bring their particular playing skills. The point of all of this is that it would be a monumental if not impossible task, to write the "definitive book" on this subject.

If you have not already done so, now is a good time to begin applying some of the things that you may have learned to songs of your own choice. If your penchant is some form of heavy rock and such, there is a good chance that none of the material in this book is applicable. Keep in mind that the material that you have experienced here is aimed at a situation where the guitar is the only accompaniment instrument. On top of that, most of what you have found in this volume is at least marginally pointed toward the jazz side of things.

Look for songs with strong melodies and interesting chord progressions. There are lots of good songs out there which might not make particularly good instrumental renditions. That being said, an interesting guitar accompaniment often brings even mundane melodies to life.

A piece of advice is offered here in regard to creating accompaniments. If the melody is busy, the accompaniment can be sparse. On the other hand, if the melody is quite sparse, the rhythm guitar can generally be a bit busier. All of these things of course are judgement calls that the players can make. As always, the ear is the final judge. If it sounds good to you, it may sound good to the audience. If it sounds like a mess, it is more than likely an aural mess to your audience.

Regarding Chord Reading:

To become a skillful at reading chords in musical notation takes a lot of work for the majority of players. All stringed instruments have some of the same problems which a guitar player faces in that most of the notes available on the instrument have at least several fingerboard locations. Although bowed instruments such as a violin or cello are usually played monophonically, they still have lots of optional fingerings. The guitar is the ultimate optional fingering instrument because of its tuning and pitch range. Of all the plucked instruments, it has more polyphonic capability than any others although a great banjo player might argue that point.

It has been mentioned several times before in this book but perhaps it is worth while remembering this little bit of advice. Generally, the chord will fall into your hand more easily if you read the notation from the low note upward. This concept tends to be hard to master because we are used to reading "text" from left to right and from the top of the page downward.

Again, it is important to not only learn and play the suggested exercises but then make an attempt to apply some of this knowledge to songs of your own choice. Because the material in this book is a bit obscure, it is likely that an audience would be a bit stymied by the fact that your repertoire is so unfamiliar if you choose to base all of your performances on what you may have learned here.

More than 40 years of teaching experience has shown that many players never achieve the ability to read chordal notation even if they become otherwise very good players. The truth is that even good players who can read single line notation tend to shy away from reading chordal notation because it is so brain intensive. There is no getting around the fact that it takes a lot of concentration. Patient practice will be rewarded.

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